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EDITORIAL COMMENT

"The Role of Parents in Emotional Problems Presented by Children in the School Setting" is a companion article to "Emotional Problems Presented by the Child in the School Setting" which was published in the December 1952 *Bulletin*. In these two articles Dr. Lippman has analyzed the emotional problems which contribute to poor school adjustment and the role which parents play in contributing to these problems. These articles merit careful study by school social workers and should help them with diagnosis. Many of these children and parents can be helped through intelligent casework. With the pressure of work which comes to the school social worker, he often loses sight of the extent of his contribution in helping children—Dr. Lippman points up this value.

In "Casework Method: An Elementary School Child", Miss Garigus has demonstrated a method by which an emotionally distressed child was helped to function more effectively in school, not only academically but also socially through improved interpersonal relationships. In this type of case, early diagnosis determined her focus, centering work with the child with no effort to treat the child's symptoms. This article rightfully follows Dr. Lippman's.

Miss Lawson in "Parents Who Refuse Casework Services" focuses on the immature parent who resents the responsibilities of parenthood. Because of his own conflicted life, he is not able to accept or use casework service whether offered by the school social worker or another community resource. However, the worker cannot withdraw and must continue searching for the ego strengths of this type of parent, some of whom are referred to by Dr. Lippman as in need of intensive psychotherapy. School social workers will recognize these parents—they need understanding.

The two articles of Dr. Lippman referred to above are reprinted and bound as one. They may be purchased by writing to the National Office.

THE ROLE OF PARENTS IN EMOTIONAL PROBLEMS PRESENTED BY CHILDREN IN THE SCHOOL SETTING¹

HYMAN S. LIPPMAN, M.D.

Amherst H. Wilder Child Guidance Clinic
St. Paul, Minnesota

We have discussed the most frequent problems presented by children in school, and it would now be well to consider problems observed in parents which play an important part in the school difficulties of their children. The poor school adjustments which bring children to the child guidance clinic are difficult to solve unless the attitudes and conflicts of the parents can be recognized and at least in part understood by them.

Parents are most helpful to their children when they can be keenly interested in their school work. Under such conditions a child is eager to tell his parents of the new things he has learned; of the difficult problems he has been unable to solve, and of the praise he has earned. He uses these experiences to strengthen the bond to his parents; to assure himself of their support, and of their continued acceptance of him even when he fails.

The most frequent cause for emotional conflict in the child is rejection by the parents. The parent who rejects the child very often neglects him and is unconcerned about what takes place in school. The child quickly learns that his parents do not "listen" when he enthusiastically reports his school experiences; that the school is blamed when he brings home reports of failing school work, or that weeks go by without his report card being signed. He can only conclude that his parents believe that school life is not important. It is not surprising, then, that his school attendance suffers and his motivation to do good school work lessens.

We are often too quick to come to the conclusion that neglecting parents do not respond to casework treatment. This is not true, particularly if the parents are young and their indifferent attitude is recog-

¹ Companion paper to *Emotional Problems Presented by the Child in the School Setting*, published in *The Bulletin*, Vol. XXVIII., No. 2, December, 1952.

This material was presented in a seminar to the school social workers of the State of Minnesota on October 24, 1952.

nized early in the school life of the child. Many of these parents are continuing a way of life familiar to them because of the social breakdown and neglect that characterized their own early lives. They often demonstrate an ability to change when a social worker is willing to take the time to work with them. In many instances they are overburdened with responsibilities, and welcome casework treatment that makes it possible to lighten their load. Sometimes key emotional problems can be located by the social worker, such as physical or mental illness, indebtedness, or total lack of social outlets, which, when dealt with, release energy which is needed to become interested in the school adjustment of their children. All of the causes of parental neglect are not so readily amenable to change. When the neglect is the result of unconscious conflict in the parent-child relationship, more intensive psychotherapy is required.

Over-protection of the child is another factor in the parent which interferes with the adequate functioning of the child in school. For many different reasons parents often find it difficult or impossible to endure the unhappiness of the child who has to be denied or frustrated. We know that in order to socialize the child his instinctual drives must be modified and he must learn to accept reality which is often unpleasant and painful. This is one of the main responsibilities of parenthood and which—if neglected—brings the child to the school dependent, fun-loving, and with poor work habits. The process of learning, in most instances, is difficult for the child, and the over-protected child may see no good reason to put forth the required effort.

It is important for the school social worker or teacher to recognize this problem early, and to point out to the parents the dangers to the child's future development and happiness, if they continue to indulge him. When the overprotection is due to lack of awareness of its ill effects, change is comparatively simple. However, when the overprotection is a result of a deep need based on the parent's own early deprivation of affection and a determination to prevent such suffering in the child, it is quite difficult to effect a change. This applies also to parents who have waited many years before they were able to have a child; who have lost a child through death, or who feel he needs special care because of past serious illness—particularly if it involves the nervous system. Even such parents lessen their overprotection as a result of intelligent casework. In some instances the indulgence is based on a deep unconscious rejection of the child, in which case any attempt to deprive the child stirs up in the parent a feeling of guilt. Such parents can only be helped through intensive therapy directed toward uncovering deep conflict. I have pur-

posely referred to other factors that produce overprotection, before mentioning unconscious rejection, and caution you against a premature diagnosis of unconscious rejection when you find that a parent indulges the child.

Problems arise when parents are too demanding of the child and refuse to accept less than superior achievement in school work, in which case the child reacts by submission or rebellion. The compliant child struggles often beyond the limits of his ability to maintain a high level of performance, aware that this is the chief way in which he can assure himself of acceptance in his home. What he gains from his parents through these efforts often falls short of the real affection he needs since such parents rarely have much affection to give. The result is often an unhappy child striving for perfection; a dissatisfaction with his performance and a feeling of emotional emptiness. Nor is a child much happier when he has to rebel against the unreasonable demands of such parents, since he is punished, made to feel ungrateful and unworthy. Here the result is often a chronic state of incompatibility between the child and his parents.

Treatment in such a situation must be directed to the parent. In some instances casework can help her discover the causes of the need for superior achievement from her child. If she is not too conflicted the mother may be able to see that her child achieves better when pressure on him is reduced, and that he is a happier and more secure child. Too often, unfortunately, the need for perfection is based on factors beyond the caseworker's ability to reach and her attempts to effect a change meet with little success.

Overanxiousness of the parents is another frequent cause for a poor school adjustment in the child. Actually, many of the factors already referred to—rejection, overprotection, and the demands for perfection, are based on deep anxiousness. Frequently, however, this is not recognized, at least not to the extent that it is in the parent whose anxiousness is the prevailing symptom. Such a parent's overconcern about the child's health, her fear that the child may be sexually attacked, and be involved in an accident or beaten by bullies, may create in the child such a feeling of apprehension that he becomes inhibited in his school performance or even fears to leave his home to go to school. I have been referring to the mother in many of these examples, without meaning to imply that the same problems in the father are either less frequent or important. We have found in our work in the child guidance clinic that many children's disturbances are not lessened unless the father as well as the

mother is included in the treatment. This applies equally to the work of the school social worker though it may produce a hardship on her if the father can only be seen after working hours.

Anxiety is the signal which the ego sets up to indicate that a danger situation exists or is imminent. When it is encountered in parents the social worker would do well to take plenty of time to allow them to discuss the many factors in their lives that produce tension, worry or anxiety. One may locate any number of situations that produce needless anxiety or that readily respond to environmental manipulation. The school social worker rarely has enough time to work exhaustively with overanxious parents, or with parents who present the other problems referred to in this discussion. She will do well to have a close working relationship with the case working agencies of her community who are in a position to offer the casework therapy that is needed. There are times when the problems are so entrenched that the casework agency cannot provide the necessary treatment in which case either the school social worker or the Family Service caseworker will refer the parents to a psychiatrist for intensive psychotherapy. This is particularly indicated in the final group of parents I would like to discuss.

During the past few years there have been many references to an interesting type of problem first mentioned by Freud many years ago in relation to parents who through unconscious needs of their own encourage their children to develop problems of behavior which they, the parents, consciously reject. Dr. Adelaide Johnson has discussed this very well in her article, "Sanctions for Superego Lacunae of Adolescents."² The parents as well as the child in this study were given intensive psychotherapy. They found in one case that a child impulsively stole objects to the conscious dismay of the mother. When the stealing stopped the mother became restless and depressed, and when the stealing recurred her depression lessened. In other words, the mother in order to remain in a state of emotional equilibrium had to manipulate the child's life so that he became delinquent. I do not want at this time to give you a detailed explanation of this bizarre behavior which you will find through reading the article. Applications of the same principle have in recent studies demonstrated that some parents have an unconscious need to have a child fail in school work or to even appear feeble-minded.³ We have

² "Searchlights on Delinquency." International Universities Press, Inc. New York. 1949.

³ "The Child's Learning Difficulty as Related to the Emotional Problem of the Mother," Nancy Staver. American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, Vol. XXIII., No. 1, pp. 131-41. January, 1953.

known for a long time that the child who has a deep neurotic fear of going to school is reacting to an unconscious need on the part of the mother to keep him home. It is obvious, from the fact that such needs are unconscious to the mother—particularly if she has a deep need to have her child be delinquent or feeble-minded, that this is a field of psychotherapy beyond the scope of casework.

School social workers vary considerably in their ability to treat parents who have emotional problems. This is because of their differences in training and experience in doing direct treatment work with adults. There are very few experienced caseworkers even after they have been psychoanalyzed, who are capable without intensive supervision to treat emotional problems based on unconscious conflict. I do not mean that parents with emotional conflicts of an unconscious nature should be denied the many other forms of casework help that the school social worker could provide. Actually, I know of no clinical condition, regardless of its seriousness, that cannot be benefited through sound casework therapy.

As in the case of the previous discussion regarding the problems presented by children in the school setting, this discussion is by no means all inclusive of the problems presented by parents. They have been chosen as those which are most frequently observed in our work in the Child Guidance Clinic.

CASEWORK METHOD: AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CHILD

G. BERNICE GARRIGUS, School Counseling Program¹

Rockford Public Schools, Rockford, Illinois

Note:

This particular case was selected because it seems to demonstrate what can be done in a school setting to help a very neurotic little girl whose mother is equally neurotic. No effort was made by the school social worker to treat Ruth's symptoms. By knowing about these symptoms, however, the school social worker was able to arrive at a working diagnosis and a tentative plan of treatment.

Through casework, Ruth was not "cured" of her neurotic traits but was helped to function more effectively, more comfortably, at this particular period of her development.

Referral and Statement of Problem:

Ruth, an eleven-year-old girl in grade five, was referred to the school social worker by her teacher who regarded her as a socially mal-adjusted child. Ruth's academic performance had never been satisfactory, although it was evident from the findings of psychological testing and from the teacher's observations in the classroom that she had the ability to perform at her grade level. Ruth did poor work in arithmetic and language. Her reading was fair. She had an especial dislike for physical education, performing poorly in that. Ruth seemed to have no friends among her peer group. She was excluded from their social activities and was always the last one to be chosen in any kind of an academic contest in the room setting. At times she was resentful toward her teacher. Ruth suffered during certain seasons from a chronic asthmatic condition. Frequently she was absent from school because of minor illnesses such as colds, headaches, stomach pains.

The teacher had met Ruth's mother, who was active in P. T. A. and in Mothers' Study Club work. Mother appeared interested in Ruth's

¹ *Visiting social counselor* is the term used to designate the *school social worker* in Rockford, Illinois.

Miss Garrigus is one of two school social workers employed for the twenty-four elementary schools in Rockford.

school progress and the teacher regarded the family as a "nice" one. The family lived in Davis School District but mother was dissatisfied with Ruth's school performance at Davis School and had had Ruth transferred to Auburn School when mother learned that Ruth would have to repeat first grade.

Treatment started in September, 1952. Ruth was seen by the school social worker for approximately eighteen weekly interviews. A close working relationship was maintained between the teacher and the school social worker. Because of the nature of Ruth's relationship to her mother, mother was not drawn into the treatment situation although she was informed that Ruth was being seen by the school social worker.

School Social Worker's Interviews:

In my initial interview with Ruth, I found her to be an attractive blond of average height for her age, but somewhat underweight. She presented many nervous mannerisms, appearing ill at ease in my presence.

I explained my function as school social worker to Ruth, commenting that I understood from her teacher that Ruth was having some difficulty at school. Perhaps I could help her. I said I had attempted to see her at the time of a previous visit to Auburn School but Ruth was absent at the time.

Ruth replied that she had visited on a farm on that date. She had had an enjoyable time and "Mommy said I could go."

Ruth volunteered that she lived in the Davis School District. Her five-year old sister attended kindergarten at Davis School but Ruth did not care for that school. Her first grade teacher at Davis School "made" Ruth repeat first grade. Ruth felt the teacher was to blame for the failure "because Mommy said Miss Carpenter did not help me."

Ruth added that her sister liked Davis School. Ruth had two sisters, ages four and five respectively. She indicated she had very little in common with the sisters since "we do not like the same things." The sisters are interested in dolls and Ruth in household activities such as cooking and sewing.

When I arrived at Auburn School a week later, Ruth's class had gone to the school ground for physical education. Ruth was standing near her teacher. When she saw me approaching, she ran to meet me and seemed eager to accompany me to the interviewing room where she explained that she was glad I had come. She could not participate in physical education because her asthma was bothering her. She said she had been bothered with asthma since the age of six years and she felt she would "always" have it unless she should move to another climate, which was unlikely. "Sometimes it just doesn't show up." Ruth added that the onset of the present attack occurred one week prior to school starting this fall. Ruth added thoughtfully, slowly, "I hated to leave home and come here." While Ruth talked, she smiled shyly at me and played with her tie.

During the next five weeks, Ruth became comfortable in the interviewing sessions. For the most part, she dealt with her negativism for the two sisters for whom she professed much affection. "They are fun but they are so silly. I am crazy about both of them but they play so silly." She said the older of the two had just been to a dentist for the first time "and you should have heard her scream." As Ruth told this, she was convulsed with laughter. She said she especially liked to tease them when they took baths together at which times she threw suds on them.

Ruth frequently spoke in a child-like way of "Mommy", and how "Mommy does things for me", such as buying a skirt, blouse, shoes, or "Mommy going places with me."

On one occasion during this series of interviews, Ruth appeared exceedingly depressed. She said she had been ill and had had to miss two days from school because of the illness. A younger neighbor girl with whom Ruth played had died suddenly, and her death had upset Ruth so much that she had been nauseated and had been unable to sleep. She remarked sadly, "Just to think she's dead. I can't believe she's gone." The week following this interview, there was a recurrence of the insomnia and nausea, but Ruth was able to continue in school.

One day Ruth smiled, and announced glibly, "Well, I can start taking part in gym now. It's frosted now and I am over the asthma. I always get over it when it frosts."

During the interviewing time, Ruth usually acted like a three or four-year-old child. She jumped about the room, going from her chair to the day bed, to the paper cutter, to the scales, to the window. Frequently she stared out of the window onto the roof of the gymnasium. She giggled a great deal. Once she volunteered she wished she might "shrink since it was no fun to grow up."

Ruth insisted I attend the "Flying-Up" session of her scout troop which was held on the day of one of my interviews with Ruth. Mother and the two sisters were coming and Ruth said she wanted me to meet them. Ruth said she wanted a new scout uniform for this occasion "but Mommy said 'not now—maybe you will get a uniform for Christmas if you will act more like a girl scout is supposed to act'." Ruth added that she helped mother some about the house but mother wanted her to assume more responsibility than Ruth had been willing to do. Ruth laughed nervously as she related this.

I attended the scout meeting at which mother and the two sisters were present. Ruth introduced the three to me, pointing out Paula, the five-year-old as, "This is the one that screamed so loud at the dentist's office." Again Ruth was convulsed with laughter. The two sisters were attractive, chubby children who sat calmly throughout the scout program. Mother and the children wore neat, becoming clothes. Mother appeared to be in the 30's and underweight.

In the interview following this one, Ruth appeared listless. I told her that I had enjoyed the "Flying-Up" exercises. She did not comment on this or thank me. She sat for a moment with her eyes closed, then announced she was ill and had had to stay at home that morning. She added she could not have come to

school even if she had been well for mother slept too late to prepare breakfast for her. She was feeling better at noon so she just came on to school.

Ruth volunteered she had received her report card on this date. All grades were "satisfactory" except physical education and she had no grade in that as she had failed to participate in gym during September and October because of her asthmatic condition. She looked injured, adding, "I don't get it."

Ruth then removed a scarf which she was wearing and played with it for some time. She volunteered that she had a "stiff neck". She then played with a pencil which she wore on a chain around her neck. She drew some very small pictures of a woman whom she identified as the school social worker. She then announced she was going to draw an "ugly" picture and this could not be the school social worker because this picture would be "too ugly" for me. The drawing turned out to be the head of a queer-looking woman. When Ruth finished with the picture, she looked at it, went into fits of laughter, then gave the picture to me.

Following this, Ruth became lively. She continued to giggle in a pleased sort of way and kept tossing her scarf up into the air and catching it.

Ruth announced she was going to stay longer than usual on this date to which I replied this would not be possible. Ruth went to the paper cutter, took some paper towels and hacked them up into small bits, giving them to me for "book markers".

Near the end of this interview, Ruth exclaimed she had forgotten something. It was her billfold. She had intended to bring the billfold on this date to show me the pictures of her boy friends. She giggled, adding she had two boy friends, one of whom she likes very much. "He is real cute and likes me."

Ruth went over to the scales and tried to weigh herself, but did not know how. She laughed, adding, "I'll just weigh my finger." She stooped to the floor, placing her finger on the scales. She then ran circles over the floor during which time she kept giggling.

In the interview which I had with Ruth on November 20, 1952, she was in a hurry to get to the interview room. She appeared happy, relaxed. Her dress was becoming, although the style was for a much younger girl. She carried a red billfold and a paper bag which was filled with things. She volunteered enthusiastically, "This is busy work and play things for us today."

Ruth produced some cord and began braiding it. When she had finished with this, she tied it around her head and danced happily around the room. She went to the mirror, and viewed herself, smiling as she did so. For several minutes she proceeded to play with a gold pencil which she wore on a chain around her neck and with a locket which dangled from the belt on her dress.

Ruth kept casting her glances toward me and smiling at me. I commented Ruth felt happy today. She replied, "Yeah," adding "I mean 'yes'." I added, "Feeling well?" She replied, "Yeah." She looked a trifle sober, adding, "I keep saying 'Yeah' to you when I mean 'Yes'." I replied that perhaps that was what Ruth wished to say today. She smiled, replying, "Yeah."

Ruth returned to the mirror and twisted in front of it, admiring herself. She commented, "I sorta like my hair this way. I fixed it myself."

Ruth then returned to the chair opposite me and began taking things out of the paper bag. She put games and many highly colored small plastic gadgets on the desk and played with them as she talked. Things had been hectic at home during the past week. Father and the younger sister, Jane, had been ill. She added with much feeling, "That brat, Jane! I could kill her!" Ruth turned her arm, displaying a small, red scratched area which she explained was caused by Jane striking her with a hair brush. "I lammed her one so hard she fell on the floor." When asked why Jane struck Ruth, Ruth replied, "I like to comb hair and tried to comb Jane's hair while she was combing it herself."

Ruth opened the billfold and showed me the pictures of her two boy friends. Other pictures in the billfold included a woman movie star, a picture of "Lizzie, the lamb," and "Kitty, the cat". Ruth pointed to one of the boy friend's picture, announcing, "I really love him." She opened a plastic box and took out the pictures of two cowboy movie stars. She held one of these close to her face and kissed it. Ruth said she would show the pictures of the boy friends to her teacher, "But Miss Hale told us not to bring playthings to school." Ruth said she had not played with the trinkets during school hours but had kept them in her desk until time for her interview. She volunteered that she had drawn a picture in art class that the teacher had said was very good but that Miss Hale had said the figures on the picture were too small.

Ruth handed me some squares of paper, announcing, "I brought these for you to draw on." Both of us drew, Ruth kept giggling, then added, "Aren't we having fun? We could do this more often."

Suddenly Ruth looked sober and asked, "Why do I come to see you?"

I replied that this was a good question and I could understand why Ruth would ask it. I said I was seeing Ruth at Miss Hale's request. Miss Hale had thought perhaps there were some things bothering Ruth which kept her from being as happy as she might otherwise be and that these things interfered with Ruth's school work.

Ruth looked sober, added, "Arithmetic is hard for me. I try very hard to get it but Miss Hale does not think I try, but I do. I try so hard to get it and worry about it so, that I think that keeps me from getting it."

Ruth volunteered she liked coming to see me. "I am not like Jimmy," she said. I asked, "How is that?" Ruth hesitated, adding, "He said things about you and called you a bad name. I would never call you that." (Jimmy is a boy in Ruth's room whom I see.) I commented that maybe that was the way Jimmy was feeling about me on the day he called me a bad name and he just let go.

I was late in getting to Auburn School the following week. Ruth said she had begun to think I was not coming. She wished she had worn her red dress on this date. She had wanted me to come the first part of the week so that she might show me her new shoes. Ruth put her feet out to show her shoes, remarking all the new was worn off now. She added that she had been concerned when

I did not appear at the appointed time and had asked Miss Hale if I were at the school.

Ruth volunteered that she told mother she was seeing me and that the interviewing room was "one place I can go and do just as I please. I told Mommy I liked to see you and Mommy was glad."

Ruth shrugged her shoulders and laughed in a smug way, adding, "I can sing and act, too. Mommy says so."

Ruth then appeared depressed and told me a melodramatic story about a little child who had been deserted by his mother and the child's Christmas would be ruined unless the mother returned to him. She related another sad story about a child who was crippled, aftermath of polio, and another about a dog that was run over and killed.

Other things brought out in this interview: Ruth had been hit by snowballs for the first time on this date at school. Some boys threw at her. She seemed to feel quite bad about this. She said she disliked arithmetic but enjoyed art.

Ruth went to the paper cutter and spent a great deal of time hacking up paper. I felt she was angry with me for my having been late.

When I saw Ruth on December 18, 1952, she appeared especially happy. She wore the infantile-like dress but had a special hairdo, that of an older girl. When I commented that her hair looked nice, Ruth said, "Mommy did it. I am going to sing soprano in our Christmas program tonight. You are coming, aren't you? All my family will be there." I said I would like very much to come, but I had not known about the program until now and I had another engagement. Ruth was disappointed and pouted for the first time.

Ruth broke the silence by telling me she had been ill that morning and had been unable to come to school until noon. She had stomach pains and mother had fixed her a special bed on the sofa. Ruth had had a wonderful time she said, watching TV. Ruth added, "And Mommy could not figure out what had caused my stomach to ache and I couldn't either."

Ruth assumed a gay mood. She said there were many interesting packages under the tree and as she lay on the sofa that morning, she enjoyed looking at them. "Mommy" made cookies and was decorating the house for Christmas. Ruth began to giggle, acting like a very young girl. She said Christmas was fun. She had found one box, "and I just know my girl scout dress is in that." Ruth added somewhat disappointedly, "I guess I won't get toys this year but I am going to have bride and groom dolls, a clue game, a girl scout dress."

Ruth paused, assumed a hostile attitude, then shouted, "I could brain that sister!" I asked, "Which one?" She replied, "The least one." I asked, "Why?" Ruth replied, "Because she is too little. I could shake her and kill her."

Ruth added that she and the two sisters had been playing school and Ruth was the teacher. She laughed, adding, "I really am strict on them and shook the little one so hard I tore her dress. Mommy said I would make a good teacher because I make them mind."

Ruth said the two of us would play school. She would be teacher and I would be her pupil. She would show me then how severely she dealt with Paula and Jane. She added that she was "Mrs. Hall" to me, and I was to address her as such, which I did.

Ruth asked for pencil and paper and prepared a page of arithmetic problems, commanding me to work every problem, and "you *have* to get them right and prove every last one of them." I worked the problems and proved each as she looked on. She was critical of the way I worked and added, "We don't do it that way in school." She changed to writing, giving me an assignment which I performed as she requested. When I asked if my work was all right, Ruth replied, "I suppose it will do."

The next time I saw Ruth, she came to the interviewing room dressed in a new sweater, skirt, and socks all Christmas gifts. Her hair was carefully done. She spent most of the time telling me what she had received for Christmas. Clothing had figured first in the gifts. In addition to the new dresses, sweater, skirts, there had been a scout uniform, a bracelet which she was wearing, a baby doll "dressed like a little girl in a beautiful red dress," a dishwashing set "that I'm crazy about," games, and more important than anything else, a wardrobe of beautiful clothes which Ruth's aunt had made for the Toni doll. Ruth added "And I thought I wouldn't get a doll or any toys this year."

Ruth appeared tired and said she had dreaded returning to school after the holidays. She was glad to miss the gym class which her coming to see me had caused her to do. However, if I had seen her after she began reading a library book, she would have been resistive to leaving her classroom to see me. She added that it was fortunate she had not begun to read the book.

Ruth giggled some but for the most part sat in her chair, which was unusual behavior. Once she went to the paper cutter and worked the blade up and down. She attempted to weigh herself, then demanded I go to the scales and determine her weight, which she was unable to estimate. When I announced her weight, she jumped up and down and beat her body, this in protest of growing up.

Near the end of the period, Ruth announced saucily, "You won't get to see Jimmy. He's sick. He's not here." She added that she would wear one of her new dresses to the interviewing room next week.

When I saw Ruth a week later, she announced we would play school again. She inquired twice if I liked to play school, asked where my work from our last session was, and scolded me for not having the material with me. Throughout the session she talked in an affected tone. Again I worked arithmetic problems first and for a change had my paper marked "very good". Next I was given a language assignment which I was unable to do satisfactorily.

Ruth introduced two new people to the class today, both imaginary boys. "John" was scolded severely for his misdemeanors and was told that Ruth had put up with enough from him today and when the principal arrived, which would be soon, he would be sent to her office.

The next week Ruth danced around, taught school again, talked in a very affected way. Again I was the pupil, worked arithmetic, missed getting my work, was scolded severely. She had two imaginary children in class, a boy and a girl, who each received scoldings.

Ruth brought a library book and read aloud to me for about fifteen minutes, the story being about "Miss Hickory". She asked me to tell *exactly* what she read. Again I was scolded for reproducing only part of the reading. She said I had not remembered all of the story. Next time I was to do better.

In the next session Ruth included several imaginary children of both sexes. She taught them as a group and I noted she was more accepting of these children and dealt patiently with them.

Ruth told me she had been having fun that week in physical education class and that she was doing better in arithmetic. She had made "E" (excellent) on each daily arithmetic assignment for the past week. I commented that Ruth must have found a way to handle the arithmetic, whereupon, she replied, "I just listen carefully now when the teacher explains how we are to work the problems for the next day."

Ruth was taking part in a girl scout play. She had a leading role in the play. She had memorized her part and repeated it to show me how well she had prepared it. It was obvious that she felt a sense of achievement in having memorized her part. She volunteered that when she grew up she thought she would go to Hollywood and be a movie star or become a singer since she felt she had talent in dramatics and music.

On this date Ruth brought three library books to the interviewing room. She volunteered that she was "crazy" about two of the books and spent the remainder of the interviewing period reading to me from one of the books.

School Social Worker's Diagnostic Impression:

Summary of Treatment—

Ruth, oldest of three, was found to be emotionally retarded. Her normal development had been hindered by a too close mother-child relationship. When she was six years of age, this relationship was altered by the birth of a sister and by separation from mother caused by Ruth's entering school. One year later, the second sister was born which resulted in Ruth's being pushed farther away from mother.

The onset of Ruth's psychosomatic ailment, asthma, dated back to the age of six years and was evidently to be associated with the emotional trauma which Ruth experienced during that period of her life. This illness served as a useful purpose in Ruth's life in that it tended to prolong her state of almost complete dependency on mother. Ruth's ambivalence over growing up came out quite clearly throughout treatment.

Ruth was hostile toward her sisters because their presence in the home deprived her of some of mother's attention. She was angry with mother for her failure to continue giving to Ruth as she once had. As a result of the suppressed hostility, Ruth was a chronically anxious child. She projected her feelings for her sisters onto other children and her feelings for mother onto her teachers. As a result, Ruth had been unable to make friends and was resentful toward authority.

In the therapeutic relationship, Ruth was able to verbalize her real feelings and bear the guilt and anxiety their expression occasioned thus freeing herself of tensions that were interfering with her life. She has become a much happier, more relaxed child, able to relate positively to children as well as to adults. For the first time since she entered school, Ruth is able to concentrate on her school work, the result being a noticeable improvement in her academic performance.

Teacher—School Social Worker Relationship:

At the time I began working with Ruth, I established a working relationship with Ruth's teacher. I sensed that Miss Hale, the teacher, accepted me professionally. She wanted to help Ruth and, furthermore, she was willing to assume her share of responsibility in the treatment situation. Although I made some effort during Ruth's treatment to help Miss Hale understand Ruth's dynamics and the nature of the therapeutic relationship, I felt these two areas remained something of enigmas to Miss Hale from the beginning to the end of treatment. In view of Miss Hale's lack of training and experience in the dynamics of human behavior, this was not surprising. However, I found that her lack of understanding of dynamics did not constitute any appreciable hindrance to treatment. Her confidence in my ability to give professional help to Ruth did contribute considerably toward the progress that was made in treatment.

I noted in the initial stage of Ruth's treatment, that Miss Hale was not especially attracted to Ruth, a slow learner, who at times showed negative feelings for the teacher. It seemed obvious that one of the areas in which I should work was in that of the teacher-child relationship.

Soon after I began seeing Ruth, her teacher complained to me that Ruth was bringing first grade readers to school and reading them aloud to her classmates during the story telling period. This was exceedingly boring to Ruth's fifth grade classmates and to Miss Hale. Miss Hale

has asked Ruth why she persisted in doing this and had requested her on several occasions to stop this, but to no avail.

I pointed out to Miss Hale that first grade reading material was easier for Ruth, a somewhat mediocre reader, to manage. Furthermore, such behavior resulted in secondary gains for Ruth in that she bored the classmates, toward whom she felt hostile because of her unresolved negativism for her siblings. By reading primary material to her classmates, Ruth could reduce them to the status of younger children much more inadequate than herself. In this way, she could feel superior to them and thus strengthen her own ego.

At the time Miss Hale made the complaint about Ruth's reading the primary material, she told me she was perplexed by Ruth's recent insistence that Miss Hale visit in Ruth's home. I interpreted this as something positive, pointing out that Ruth was becoming more sociable. Perhaps she was proud of her teacher and wished to share her with her family, or could it be that the sister's kindergarten teacher at Davis School had made friendly overtures to Ruth's family by visiting in the home and Ruth wanted her teacher to do the same.

Once when I visited in Ruth's classroom after school was dismissed, Miss Hale showed me one of Ruth's drawings which was on display in the room. She said the picture was well done but the figure, that of a woman, which Ruth had drawn onto a landscape, was entirely too small. She said Ruth's penmanship was cramped and too small. She added that she had told Ruth time after time about this, but Ruth persisted in making small figures in art and producing cramped writing. I explained Ruth's small figures and her cramped writing in terms of Ruth's tension, of her restricted way of operating, adding that when she became more relaxed, more sure of herself, she would possibly let go and produce longer lines and consequently larger figures. To this comment, Miss Hale replied, "Ruth did come out very well this week on her California Achievement Test."

Together Miss Hale and I discussed Ruth's progress in socializing as it was evidenced from time to time in her classroom, in the church, in girl scouts. On the occasion of Ruth's including several children of both sexes in the game of playing school which occurred during one of her interviews with me, Miss Hale told me that on the previous day, Ruth had been among the first chosen to represent a group in a spelling contest. Previously Ruth had been the last one chosen. Miss Hale added, "But why shouldn't she? Ruth is a good speller."

Following my interview with Ruth in which she asked why I was seeing her and commented on how difficult it was for her to learn arithmetic, I visited in Miss Hale's room. I told Miss Hale Ruth had said she was trying so hard in arithmetic that she thought that was the reason she could not learn it, but that Miss Hale did not seem to realize how hard she was trying. Miss Hale asked, "Do you think I should treat Ruth like all the other members of her group or do you think I should let up on her? I have certain standards of performance that I expect of my pupils and if I fail to hold to these standards I feel that I would get nowhere." I replied that Miss Hale was the teacher, therefore, she should decide for herself how far she might go in individualizing Ruth in the classroom. I felt that had Ruth become aggressive in the classroom during the course of treatment, her teacher might have found it difficult to accept her behavior. Ruth must have sensed this for she proceeded during the course of treatment to give expression to her hostility in the interviewing situations and in the home rather than to permit it to come out in the classroom.

As treatment progressed, Miss Hale was able to see Ruth become a happier, more relaxed child. Miss Hale observed that Ruth's reading, her writing, her art work improved. Miss Hale told me during the last two weeks of my seeing Ruth that she made "excellent" on all of her daily arithmetic assignments. Miss Hale had praised Ruth for this and for her excellent art work. Miss Hale commented to me on how much more positively Ruth was relating to her classmates and they, in turn, to her.

Miss Hale directed Ruth's class in physical education. Near the end of treatment, she reported that Ruth was enjoying physical education for the first time since Miss Hale began directing the class. Ruth's muscular coordination had improved. In commenting on this improvement, Miss Hale said, "I think it is because Ruth succeeded recently in pitching the basketball into the goal twice in succession. Her success gave her confidence to try harder." To Miss Hale this conclusion was the logical one, therefore, I made no effort to associate Ruth's improved muscular coordination with treatment.

I felt that the relationship between Ruth and her teacher was strengthened during the course of Ruth's treatment and that Ruth was enjoying school for the first time since she started.

Summary:

Ruth, an eleven-year-old girl in fifth grade, was referred to the school social worker by her teacher who saw Ruth's problems as social maladjustment, unsatisfactory school performance, resentment toward authority. She was frequently absent from school due to minor illnesses. Ruth was bothered with a chronic asthmatic condition during certain seasons of the year.

A study of Ruth's situation by the school social worker revealed that she was in conflict over growing up. Her normal development had been hindered by a too close mother-child relationship. Ruth was ambivalent in her feelings for mother. She had been unable to work through her negative feelings for her two younger sisters. She projected these feelings onto others and consequently was unable to handle her interpersonal relationships satisfactorily. Ruth used the psychosomatic illness as an attention getting mechanism and as a defense against her reality situation.

Treatment, which consisted of eighteen weekly interviews, was directed toward giving Ruth acceptance, strengthening her ego, helping her to come to grips with some of the conflicts which were interfering with her life at that particular time. In treatment, Ruth was able to deal with her real feelings, both through verbalization and through play. As her tension was released, Ruth became more relaxed, more comfortable. This enabled her to use herself more effectively in her life situation.

In conjunction with Ruth's treatment a working relationship between the teacher and the school social worker was established. Through this relationship, the school social worker was able to arrive at a better understanding of Ruth's behavior and to determine more fully the nature and extent of movement in treatment.

By sharing the responsibility of this "problem child" with the school social worker, the teacher's tension as it related to Ruth's poor academic performance and her behavior in the school room was lessened.

The school social worker was able to help the teacher to a better understanding of Ruth's behavior in the classroom. As a result of the teacher and the school social worker working together, the teacher was helped to a better acceptance of Ruth.

PARENTS WHO REFUSE CASEWORK SERVICES

GARNET LARSON, Associate Professor, Graduate School of Social Work
The University of Nebraska, Lincoln, Nebraska

In the usual family agency and child guidance clinic, the intake worker carefully screens applications for service since the agency must choose the amount and type of service it can give within the limits of its staff and budget. Service is then usually offered to those applicants who appear to be able to benefit from it. If service is to be given a child, one parent is usually required to come to the agency regularly in accordance with an agreed upon plan, for it is felt that successful working with a child will entail helping the parent achieve a more positive parenthood. Although this is a sound policy, many children are then deprived of social agency services until such time as they become wards of the court or the state or are at least out of their own homes. At such a time, in spite of the fact that the child may have suffered even greater damage over a longer period of time, the worker is willing to chance that the child has within himself sources of ego strength that will help him achieve maturity to live with a degree of social acceptability.

The school and court social workers are not always so fortunate as to be in position to determine the terms upon which casework services will be provided. Oftentimes the child brought to their attention is in desperate need of an adult relationship, for his parents are unwilling and often unable to meet any type of requirement in behalf of their child. The decision of the school social worker, because of the nature of the setting and the purpose of the worker in that setting, may be to attempt service or at least remain with the child even though continued damage takes place.

I am interested in this paper only in the parent who refuses to accept any casework plan, particularly for himself, and who so becomes a vital threat to our relationship and accomplishments with the child. The success of the social worker, regardless of skill, ability, desire, interest, or deep concern, is measured only in terms of the change desired and accomplished on the part of the client. By their refusal to accept any responsibility for the part that they play, these parents may thus determine in large part the success of our work with a child. We often find ourselves openly angry with them, which anger may be expressed in veiled or

directed hostility. There are many reasons for our anger: we identify with the child; we relive part of our own child-parent conflicts; we recognize the desperate need of a child for service and that the determination of the result of that service belongs to a person who denies both the child and us; the child offers us a parent-child relationship which many of us otherwise do not have and we are determined to be better parents than those parents who thwart us and reject the child, sometimes with abuse or neglect; if we are parents, we find in the child an extension of our parenthood; we chaff under authority, for these parents in their way act as restraints upon our achievement by ignoring or baiting us, and although they do not openly demand that we fail, they accomplish such failure even more skillfully. All of these things influence our attitudes towards these parents who can so confuse and confound us in our professional activity.

If these parents came to us as clients, we would, I am certain, be more able to accept and work with them, even if we failed. Our training in acceptance, understanding, and evaluation of potentials fits us to accept rejection and hostility, but usually in a casework-client relationship, after the acceptance of service. These parents, however, do not fit easily into our client-focused preparation. They refuse to respond to our interest in the child, or to be coerced, cajoled, reasoned, or enticed into the use of our services. They refuse to take cognizance of what they are doing to our clients and their child, and they remain outside the reach of our skills and abilities. Under other circumstances we might regard them as people; instead we are apt to see them as a source of damage to the child and an instrument of failure to us.

Not long ago I stood in a juvenile court room by the side of a fourteen year old boy who had just been committed to the Boys' Training School for petty stealing. His mother, a blond who was a buyer for a fashionable store downtown, looked over the other parents sitting huddled and silently waiting their turn to go before the judge, and said bitterly, "See, this is what you have brought your father and me to." Her husband, owner of a chain of drug-stores and handsome in the well-groomed way of a successful businessman, tried obviously to hold back by his words but finally blurted out, "Proud of yourself, aren't you." This was their farewell to a son to whom they had not been good parents. They had been divorced several years before but had a joint responsibility for the son who was a constant reminder both of their former relationship and of a parenthood each hated because of the other. Their responsibility was one they neither wanted nor could fulfill. They had met frequently

over the years to discuss and plan for the boy, but their personal animosities were too deep and driving. Usually the boy had stood sullenly by while they tried to punish the other with his care and the responsibility for his increasing difficulties. Now he had brought them into court, a place where respectable and financially successful parents do not come except when disgraced by their children. They had been forced to listen to a sharp speech by the judge, designed to sting and humiliate them even as he took their son away, charging them with the lack of caring what happened to their child. Their efforts were unrecognized and belittled as deliberate attempts to destroy the child who had by "sure and deliberate action" made them objects of judicial censure and social disapprobation. Could they have been freed of their parental responsibilities, they believed they could have used their business successes as an acceptable means of competitive achievement against the other. But their son would not allow them that figment of self-deception, and according to his cold statement, he had stolen so he might go to the Training School in order that they could know what kind of parents they were. With uncanny sureness he had pursued a course of destroying them to themselves. That he in turn was destroying himself had not merit enough for his consideration. Their words would eat their way deeper into his being, but his act in turn would never let them fully deceive themselves as to their competency and social status. None of them would forget.

In the same court sometime later, an immigrant mother rocked and twisted her withered and flabby body while her wails filled the waiting room, causing the other parents to move uneasily. Over and over came the words, "My Anna—bad. I lock her in her room. But she break out. Bad. Bad. My Anna, bad." Anna had been having weekly sexual relations with an Italian shoemaker for two dollars and her mother had hounded her about her ripening body and her assumed interest in its use. "I tell her, she get in trouble. She disgrace us. She disgrace her mother. I beat her. I tell her she grow up like Rosy. Some day she have a baby. I have troubles." Anna was the youngest of nine children, fatherless, with two brothers dying in a tuberculosis hospital, without a pretty feature in her body, without well-chosen clothes. Her mother and older brothers had watched her closely lest "something happen," for she was to go to school and be what they were not. They bemoaned the fate of those who came guilelessly to America to die of disease, to be victims of unemployment announced in a pay envelop, to fear that tuberculosis would kill them also. But Anna, a retarded child, was to achieve what they had hoped America would hold for them, an education. There was

no other child to fulfill their longing. The miserable girl who sat huddled in her ill-fitting clothes was hardly a promising figure on which to pin family fulfillment and justification of hardships. Her already swelling body mocked their selfish, unrealistic demands. It was not that her pregnancy was unacceptable, for in their neighborhood that was not unusual. They had brought her to court themselves, for her pregnancy made it impossible for them to continue to vest in her their hope for themselves. The judge had not reminded the mother of her imperfectly performed duty of motherhood, for her complaints had been too loud and continuous. He had called the next case and sent her back to her fear-laden, satisfaction-starved life, filled with resentment that Anna had betrayed the thing she thought would have justified her unhappiness—achievement in her child. But she had honestly been the best mother she was able to be.

The above parents had seen the school social worker at her request, but had refused for different reasons to enter into any plan for helping their children. They were relieved that the court removed them of responsibility for their children, a responsibility they neither wanted nor knew how to meet. Mrs. Smith used another method to refuse case-work service. She agreed to come for interviews with apparent eagerness, but she seldom kept her interview appointments. She had finally brought Karl to Children's Hospital for a much needed operation for his chronic mastoiditis. Social workers, doctors, public health nurses, teachers had told her both firmly and sometimes sharply that Karl had little hearing left and that his life might be endangered. Cotton and medications had been supplied, but Karl had continued to come to school with toilet paper and newspaper stuffed in his ears. The odor from the discharge made it necessary that he sit apart from the other pupils. Now she had agreed to the operation. With talkative excitement she opened a suitcase to show the doctor and the social worker what she had brought Karl—a new suit, a new shirt, new underwear, a tie, a tie clasp. Karl heard but little and his not too active mind was bewildered. The doctor tried to help. "Everything is here," he said gaily, "except shoes. You'll walk out of here and mother will have to buy them, too." Mrs. Smith nodded with pleased smiling innocence. "I didn't buy no shoes," she said. "Maybe he won't need shoes." She had anticipated that the burden of motherhood might be removed from her. Karl lived through the operation. He went home in old shoes in contrast to his new suit. Newspaper appeared again in Karl's ears. Mrs. Smith became evasive of appointments and occasionally abusive of the worker and the doctors who had

not emancipated her from her too heavy responsibility. She had hoped to bury, much as a child plays at burial, without knowledge of its meaning. But her problem trudged again into her world in old shoes and she still faced an unwanted child to whom other people insisted she be a mother on their terms. Her immature, unformed ego could not comprehend the extent of her responsibility, and she felt aggrieved, as does a child who has seen a happy acceptable disposition of a too heavy problem only to have it returned.

These were perhaps bad parents, but they were using their parenthood as they were able. They had little to offer a child or themselves as adults. Examples could be multiplied. The man who shouts at the worker to leave his son alone, he wants a boy who can stand up for himself and use his fists as a man, and he hopes his son does not fall in the hands of a female like the worker. The woman who refuses to believe her son can do anything wrong, he is so good and kind, it must be that others are jealous, not of her son but of her for having such a good boy. The man who beats his son but refuses help, for he is afraid to find out he is not a good father. The mother who sleeps late after many night callers, for whom sexual acts have an immature pleasure, and who tries to close the door quickly, declaring her daughter is all right and giggling as a naughty child who is both titillated and a bit apprehensive that a parent find out her secret sex acts. The defeated parent who wishes to give the child to the worker, sorry for herself, unable to try further, finding parenthood too hard even to think about more. The mother who attaches herself to the worker, asking for advice and decisions, herself looking for a mother, but not chancing any continuing relationship lest the child instead of she find the mother both need. The mother who wants the worker to enter into conspiracy against her college professor husband who cannot allow any member of his family to receive help from a social worker, for how could he maintain his academic pride if he were seen going into a social agency for help in raising his son. The parents who ask the judge to place their daughter in a Training School, because they are afraid the daughter will get into trouble. She refuses to say what she does nights, she sasses her parents, won't mind, and smiles knowingly. Later the girl sees the social worker, smiling with a supercilious derogatory smile. "My mother never did care what happened to us kids. Let her cry. I hope she cries her eyes out. If I have a baby, it's good enough for her." And at the next, and last interview, the mother sobs, "I was never meant to be a mother. I don't know how. I hate her. She drove my second husband away. She hates my men friends. I have a right to some fun. I hope a man fixes her good."

These are some of the parents who exasperate and anger the social workers. Their name is Legion, but they are earnest in their efforts to handle the too-heavy burden of parenthood. Their struggle is often a cagey battle to prevent others from pushing their parenthood constantly before them. For as the social worker proposes, they dispose. Their children, however, refuse to let them remain content in their pretenses. For always the child can bring upon them censorship and attention from the school, the social agency, the community, the law. They cannot escape their child.

Even as the client is a determining force in our success as caseworkers, so a child is the determining agent of the success of a parent. We are well aware of the effect of a parent on the child; we are less aware of the effect of the child upon parents. There is no predictable relationship between psychological readiness for the consummation of the sexual act and readiness for parenthood. If parenthood results, the parent has no socially acceptable recourse. He must accept the child with whatever joy he actually feels or can simulate. The birth of the child is the beginning of a continuing situation from which he cannot acceptably escape for a period of many years. Under certain circumstances, one can acceptably repudiate parents, a husband or wife, brothers or sisters, but not a child. There is no way of sending the child back for revisions, or of exchanging it for one in accordance with the requirements of the parents.

Most parents would like to be good parents, at least in the sense that they would like their children to be credits to them and to be happy, even if only to reduce the awareness of their responsibility. The strength of this desire, however, will be modified by the strength of other demands made upon emotional energy. If a parent has not achieved emotional maturity prior to parenthood, it is useless to assume that such maturity will develop in him because of parenthood. It is also useless to assume children, either in child or adult bodies, can meet successfully the demands of parenthood.

No mature parent can in and of his own desire have the assurance that he will or can be a good parent. He may work hard at parenthood as he understands it, he may read and consider carefully, expend genuine love and pride, provide well physically, seek advice from experts in child care, and yet have no assurance that he will be a good parent. He may have the experience of having invested time, emotion, thought, and effort in his parenthood and see another parent with apparently less will or desire have better success. There are obviously certain types of relation-

ship between parent and child and certain types of parents who appear to succeed better than others, but such success is tested by the child himself.

To live twenty-four hours a day, day in and day out, for something like eighteen years, with a constantly changing, constantly demanding child is something of a feat under the best of conditions. Nor can a parent be all things to his child. There are the influences of social groups, the child's own physical and mental abilities, his experiences of a traumatic or a pleasurable nature outside the home, his basic ego pattern that appears to be congenital, the influence of teachers, friends, ministers, chance acquaintances, buddies, and in many instances, social workers. The secure parent may suffer concern and sometimes qualms, but he is not deeply upset by demands nor by an occasional failure to meet these demands adequately, for the basic quality between the parent and child is love, and love endureth many things. The immature parent responds as a child might respond, in fear, anger, by counter demands, or by denial of responsibility or ability. He may become openly aggressive, punitive, or may champion the son he cannot handle, for if he cannot conquer a problem he identifies with it. He may delight in his troublesome child who punishes society for him, or he may cringe in guilt because of his weakness, and as he hates himself, so he hates his child that will not let himself pretend otherwise.

But he cannot dispose of his problem. Nor can he solve it. He usually has no vacation from it, for children are persistent and enduring. The person who arrives at his door, or calls him by telephone, or writes him a letter about his child is reminding him of at least two things: first, that he has not been an adequate parent and he is now to be called to account for his lack; and second, that he must become a better parent than he feels he can be. As a child in an adult body, he cannot put the welfare of his child first. The insult and the threat are immediately his, and the fear of what may happen to him when a more mature and competent person confronts him with his responsibility is as varied as the reactions of a child confronted with too heavy a task, but one for which he must give accounting to a capable authoritarian person.

A social worker must sometimes feel irritation, but she who has been trained to expect strength and maturity and responsibility only in such degree as a person is capable at any time of exhibiting them, must remember, these parents are people, too. They, too, have capacities and limitations, and may not be capable of responding either to the demands of a

social order or of the social agencies who represent these demands. Their children need help. These parents may refuse to become our clients, but they need understanding, too.

MEMBERSHIP

Membership in a professional organization is a strengthening factor for the individual practicing within that profession. This is as true for the school social worker as it has long been for members of other professions. National Association of School Social Workers has members in 38 states and in Hawaii, Puerto Rico and India.

All members receive the National Association of School Social Workers Bulletin and other materials such as Newsletter, book lists, conference programs, notices, and other publicity. Membership is determined by the training and experience of the applicant.

Applications for membership and a statement of membership requirements may be obtained from the Membership Chairman, Mrs. Helen Roell, Indianapolis Public Schools, 150 N. Meridian Street, Indianapolis, Indiana.

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